

Message Text

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PAGE 01 STATE 192712
ORIGIN EUR-12

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P R 312116Z JUL 78
FM SECSTATE WASHDC
TO AMEMBASSY ANKARA PRIORITY
INFO AMCONSUL ADANA
AMCONSUL ISTANBUL
AMCONSUL IZMIR

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: CASC, PINS, TU

SUBJECT: MIDNIGHT EXPRESS

1. DURING JULY 28 MEETING WITH TURKISH DCM NURES (SEPTTEL),
DEPTOFF DISCUSSED INFORMAL PAPER WHICH NURES HAD GIVEN
DEPT (EUR/SE) JULY 18 RE "MIDNIGHT EXPRESS", MOVIE ON BILLY
HAYES CASE TO BE DISTRIBUTED IN THE U.S. THIS FALL BY
COLUMBIA PICTURES (TEXT OF TURKISH EMBASSY PAPER IN PARA
4). IN HIS EARLIER PRESENTATION (MEMCON POUCHED ANKARA AND
ISTANBUL), NURES HAD EXPRESSED CONCERN THAT THIS FILM DES-
CRIBED AS "PATENTLY ABUSIVE" TOWARD TURKEY, WOULD GENERATE
ADVERSE PUBLICITY AND SERIOUS MISCONCEPTIONS OF TURKISH
JUDICIAL SYSTEM IF SHOWN IN THE U.S. NURES SAID HE RECOG-
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PAGE 02 STATE 192712

NIZED THERE WERE NO FILM CENSORSHIP LAWS IN THE U.S. WHICH
WOULD PRECLUDE SHOWING A FILM SUCH AS THIS AND THAT FREE-
DOM OF EXPRESSION WAS INVOLVED. NEVERTHELESS, HE URGED
THE DEPARTMENT TO DO WHATEVER IT COULD. MEANWHILE, TURKISH
CONGEN IN NEW YORK HAS EXPRESSED TURKISH CONCERNS TO
COLUMBIA PICTURES.

2. DEPTOFF TOLD NURES THAT DEPT OFFICES DEALING WITH PUBLIC AFFAIRS HAVE BEEN CONSULTED ON THIS MATTER. CONSENSUS OF OPINION IS THAT THERE ARE STRICT LIMITS ON WHAT DEPT CAN DO TO BE HELPFUL UNDER CIRCUMSTANCES AND THAT ANY EFFORT WE UNDERTOOK COULD BE COUNTERPRODUCTIVE. PROMOTERS

OF FILM MIGHT EXPLOIT FOR PUBLICITY PURPOSES ANY LETTER OR OTHER FORMAL CONTACT BY DEPT COMPLAINING ABOUT DISTORTIONS IN FILM, OR EVEN SIMPLY RELAYING TURKISH CONCERNS. HOWEVER, DEPT WAS PREPARED WHENEVER CONTACTED BY MEDIA RE "MIDNIGHT EXPRESS" TO DISCUSS BACKGROUND OF HAYES CASE, PLACING IT IN PERSPECTIVE OF OVERALL US-TURKISH RELATIONS, INCLUDING CURRENT EFFORTS TO NEGOTIATE PRISONER TRANSFER TREATY.

3. LATER IN DAY DEPTOFF WAS CALLED BY CORRESPONDENT FOR NORTH AMERICAN NEWSPAPER ALLIANCE, WHO SAID PROMOTERS PLAN TO INVITE INTERESTED DEPTOFFS TO PRESCREENING OF FILM IN WASHINGTON SOMETIME IN LATE AUGUST. FILM IS CURRENTLY SCHEDULED TO OPEN IN NEW YORK OCTOBER 6, WITH RELEASE TO OTHER PARTS OF COUNTRY LATER IN OCTOBER. CORRESPONDENT ALSO SAID HAYES PLANS PROMOTIONAL TOUR OF US IN CONJUNCTION WITH RELEASE OF FILM.

4. TEXT OF INFORMAL PAPER GIVEN TO DEPT BY NURES JULY 18.

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PAGE 03 STATE 192712

BEGIN TEXT:

ON OCTOBER 7, 1970, AN AMERICAN CITIZEN BY THE NAME OF BILLY HAYES WAS ARRESTED AT ISTANBUL AIRPORT FOR TRYING TO SMUGGLE 2.1 KILOGRAMS OF HASHISH AND WAS SUBSEQUENTLY SENTENCED TO 30 YEARS IMPRISONMENT. HOWEVER, HAYES ESCAPED FROM THE IMRALI PRISON IN TURKEY AND MADE HIS WAY BACK TO THE UNITED STATES.

HAYES HAS WRITTEN A BOOK BASED ON HIS EXPERIENCES ENTITLED THE "MIDNIGHT EXPRESS" WHICH IS UNFORTUNATELY FILLED WITH LIES, MISREPRESENTATIONS AND OUTRIGHT FABRICATIONS. THE BOOK HAS RECENTLY BEEN MADE INTO A FILM BY THE SAME NAME, WITH THE PARTICIPATION OF CERTAIN INDIVIDUALS OF ARMENIAN AND GREEK BACKGROUNDS. THIS FILM CARRIES HAYES' ALLEGATIONS TO THE EXTREME BY INSULTING THE TURKISH NATION AS A WHOLE WITH ALL ITS SOCIAL INSTITUTIONS AND WAY OF LIFE WHILE FREQUENTLY REFERRING TO TURKEY WITH SUCH DEGRADING DESCRIPTIONS FOUND TO BE IMPROPER TO EXPRESS HERE. A SELF-CONFESSED SMUGGLER IS TURNED INTO A HERO WITH TURKEY GETTING PRACTICALLY ALL THE BLAME MERELY BECAUSE SHE HAD APPLIED LAW IN THE FACE OF A PROVEN CRIME.

WHEN THIS FILM WAS REVIEWED BY THE FRENCH NEWSPAPER "LE MONDE" IN ITS MAY 20TH ISSUE, IT WAS DENOUNCED AS "RACIST" AS WELL AS "DANGEROUS AND INSUPPORTABLE".

WHILE FULLY APPRECIATING AND SUPPORTING THE FREEDOM OF

SPEECH AND EXPRESSION, THE TURKISH GOVERNMENT AND ITS PEOPLE WOULD FEEL DEEPLY HURT IF THIS PATENTLY ABUSIVE FILM IS SHOWN HERE IN THIS COUNTRY, FRIENDLY TO TURKEY. THE TURKISH GOVERNMENT SINCERELY HOPES THAT THE UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT AND ALL ITS BODIES ON THE FEDERAL AND STATE LEVEL WOULD PLEASE EXERCISE THEIR AUTHORITY TO ITS LIMITS IN THE CASE OF THIS FILM WHICH IS AN AFFRONT TO THE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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PAGE 04 STATE 192712

TURKISH NATION. END TEXT. VANCE

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Message Attributes

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